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Africa Review

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AFRICA REVIEW

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Nigeria: Status of Emergent Parties and Aspirants

Despite months of behind-the-scenes civilian politicking, it is still too early to predict the number and final form of the political parties that will emerge after 1 October, when open political activity is formally resumed under the military's plan to restore Nigeria to constitutional rule a year later. Some main proto-parties have appeared, with smaller political groups cropping up every week.

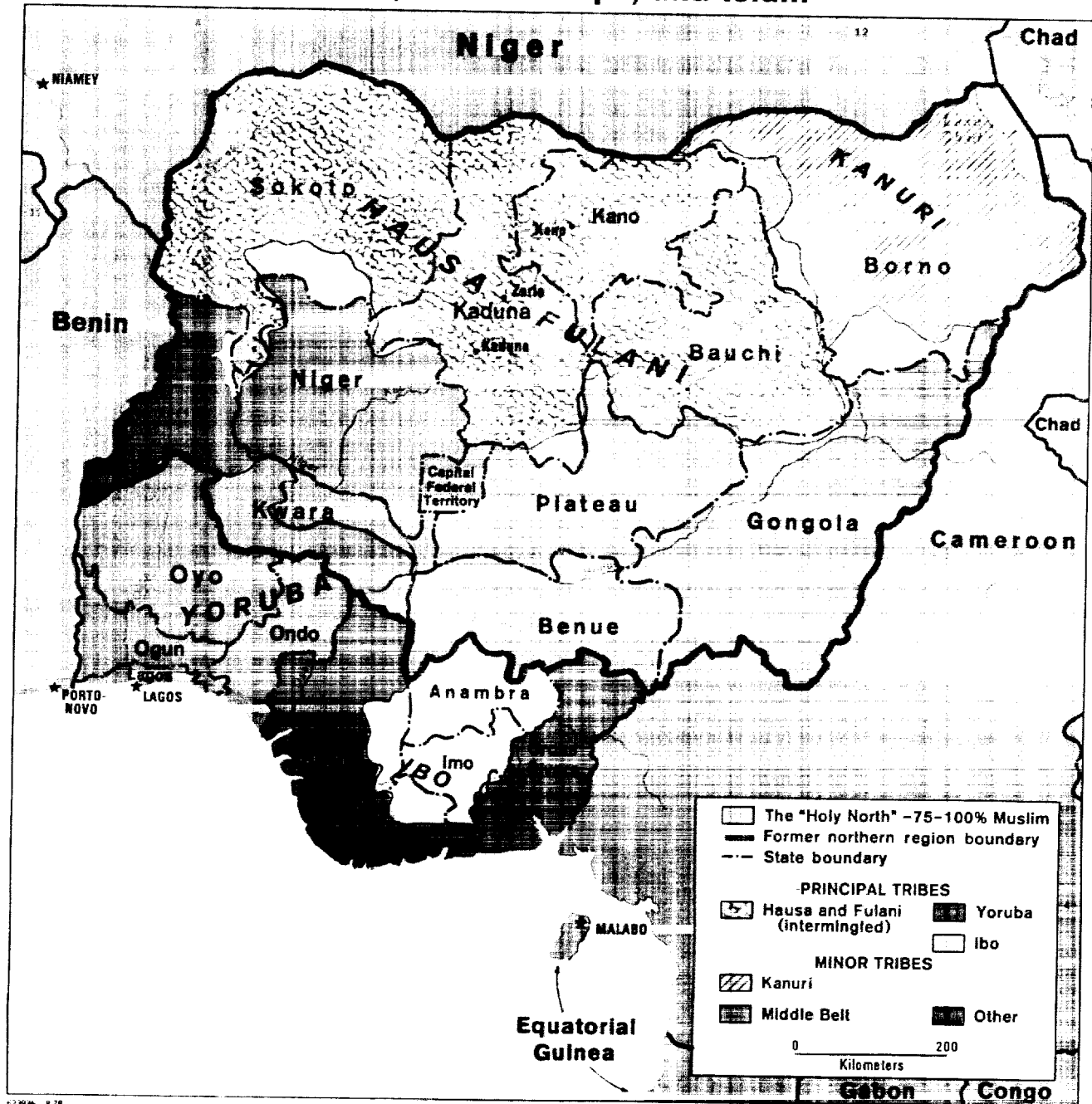
The political situation is likely to remain extremely fluid for some time. Coalition building and confused, often chaotic, political maneuvering is continuing as each group tries to broaden its geographic base, and this could drastically change the composition of some emergent parties. We can expect a variety of movements to emerge, one another in various combinations, and die or prosper before the political picture begins to stabilize later this year. Only then will it become clear who the presidential frontrunners are and what their electoral strategies will be.

Nigeria's new multiparty system is developing generally along traditional regional and ethnic lines that proved so divisive during the country's 1960-66 experiment in civilian government, which ended in military rule and civil war. There are few signs of the much vaunted new breed of young politicians who many Nigerians hoped would materialize after 12 years of military rule. Nigeria's developing parties are dominated by and large by old political figures. It is evident, however, that Nigeria's younger political generation is as prone to ethnic parochialism and political confrontation as were their elders, if not more so. Many older generation politicians who remember the past, however, seem less enthusiastic about repeating it. Such attitudes, to the degree that they can be translated into reality, may contribute to the more responsible political behavior that is needed for a successful return to civilian rule.

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Nigeria: Federal States, Tribal Groups, and Islam



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The most compelling factors that may encourage a more national outlook in future political activity are the party formation and election requirements in Nigeria's new constitution. To gain a place on the ballot, political parties must demonstrate that they have at least nominal nationwide status. Each party must have representatives on its governing body from 13 of Nigeria's states. Most importantly, the winning presidential candidate must obtain a majority of votes nationwide and one quarter of the votes in at least 13 states. These requirements are forcing Nigerian politicians to try to put together broad-based, multiethnic party coalitions.

The Electoral Setting

There will be a series of five state- and national-level elections beginning next spring, culminating with the presidential contest. Whoever the presidential winner is in 1979, it seems unlikely that he can hope to receive more than 35 to 40 percent of the total vote, given the electoral and ethnic setting in which Nigerian politicians must operate. The selection of a president may very well be decided by a parliamentary runoff election in which the federal and state legislature constitute themselves as an electoral college to choose a president by simple majority rule.

Nigeria's 47.5 million registered voters are distributed among six fairly distinctive groupings based on ethnic and historical considerations. These groupings provide the building blocks with which presidential aspirants must assemble winning coalitions. In calculating their strategies, they are differentiating between stronghold areas--ones in which a candidate expects to pick up his highest vote--and filler areas in which a candidate will try to get the 25 percent vote necessary to satisfy constitutional requirements.

- The Muslim North, including Sokoto, Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Borno, and part of Niger States, is the largest and seemingly most cohesive bloc; it contains 38 percent of the electorate.

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- The Middle Belt, including Kwara, Plateau, Benue, Gongola, and part of Niger State, has 14 percent of the total vote. This is a politically divided, ethnically and religiously mixed buffer zone between the Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south.
- Yorubaland, including Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, and part of Kwara States, has 22 percent of the electorate. The Yoruba traditionally have been Nigeria's most politically factionalized people.
- The Ibo East, with 13 percent of the vote, is made up of Imo and Anambra States. Politically cohesive in the past, the Ibo now are split into several groups but may yet unite behind the national candidate who appears to be a winner.
- The Non-Ibo East, including minority tribesmen of Cross Rivers and Rivers States with 8 percent of the electorate, are relatively united by anti-Ibo feeling and history.
- Bendel State, a southern borderland with 5 percent of the vote, whose minority tribesmen traditionally have been the object of competing Yoruba and Ibo politicians.

FEDECO and Looming Political Controversies

The political fortunes of many would-be politicians and the smooth operation of Nigeria's electoral machinery depend in large part on a six-man Federal Electoral Committee headed by chairman Chief Ani. FEDECO inevitably will be the object of public criticism and intense pressure in the period ahead. It has the politically sensitive tasks of registering political parties, issuing Nigeria's voter roll, and delineating electoral constituencies.

For a political party to be recognized, it must adhere to guidelines intended to reduce tribal and regional

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particularism and to give the military government a handle on party finances:

- Party membership must be open to every Nigerian.
- The party name must not have ethnic or religious connotations or refer only to one area of Nigeria.
- Party headquarters must be in the federal capital of Lagos.
- Party goon squads are forbidden.
- Party financial statements, including sources of funds, must be submitted; foreign sources of income are prohibited.

A serious political storm reflecting traditional regional and ethnic rivalries could erupt later this month when a preliminary national voter roll is released for public scrutiny (15-29 September) and the delineation of electoral districts for federal and state legislatures is announced (22 September). The accuracy of the registration figures is open to question. Southerners, in particular, have long doubted the reported large northern population and suspect there is widespread overregistration in that region. These figures may be further distorted because as many as 5 million unregistered Nigerian voters could be added before a final roll is issued by the end of the year. FEDECO by its own admission has been gerrymandering legislative districts on the basis of ethnic considerations.

Public commentary will indicate to what degree FEDECO's electoral exercise meshes with the average Nigerian's perception of the demographic realities in the country. Competing regional and ethnic groups have strong opinions about what the results ought to show. Each group is likely to oppose results that would place it at a disadvantage. For Nigerians, FEDECO's electoral operation is akin to census taking, long a politically controversial and potentially explosive issue, since they see such counts as determining their political weight in the government.

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Head of State General Obasanjo, reflecting deep concern about Nigeria's potential for instability, recently called on the country's local traditional leaders to use their influence to ensure a smooth transition to civilian rule and to be above partisan politics. He plans to make similar appeals to other important groups in Nigerian society.

Party Development in the North

It appears likely that there will be two northern Muslim-based parties, at least initially. One, launched late last month and calling itself the National Movement, represents the northern political establishment and is built around the remnants of the Hausa-Fulani-led Northern People's Congress Party that dominated postindependence electoral politics. It seems destined to be the major northern party with the greatest popular support in the region and to have the best chance of success in the national arena. The party claims to have founding members in all of Nigeria's 19 states.

The National Movement is the outgrowth of a drive by establishment leaders to try to reestablish "northern unity" following the defeat in the constituent assembly last spring of the region's controversial proposal for a federal Islamic court of appeals. Northern leaders also acted out of a strong concern that southerners, particularly Chief Awolowo's Yoruba group, might have an early edge over the north in getting themselves organized politically.

Younger, inexperienced northern politicians who represented the Muslim north in the constituent assembly have since turned toward the northern political establishment for leadership. This alliance appears to be uneasy, however, and it is not clear how cohesive the National Movement is. The establishment apparently has decided to live with the Islamic court defeat and to reopen the battle under a civilian government. Even so, some younger rebellious hardliners are calling for reopening the court issue, which has substantially increased traditional north-south tensions this year.

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Shehu Shagari

Several prominent Muslim figures have been vying with one another for northern leadership since last fall, and it is unclear if the establishment party has been able to agree on a presidential candidate. One likely choice is Shehu Shagari, but this will not be known until the party holds a nominating convention sometime after the ban on politics is lifted next month. Shagari is a 53-year-old Hausa tribesman from Sokoto State who held various ministerial posts in Nigeria's first civilian government. He has a rep-

utation for honesty and political moderation. Shagari reportedly has widespread political contacts throughout the country and is respected for his business acumen.

A second northern party apparently will be formed by Waziri Ibrahim, a wealthy 52-year-old businessman of the Muslim Kanuri tribe from Borno State and a former minister in the first civilian government. He may be the only major northern politician outside the ranks of the National Movement. It seems unlikely at this point that he will give up his presidential ambitions despite his eroded support in the north. As a Kanuri, Ibrahim is not an acceptable alternative candidate for members of the north's Hausa-Fulani establishment. He also did not take a public stand on the Islamic court issue, though this posture may have won him friends in the south.

Northern electoral strategy, be it by the establishment party or by Ibrahim's group, is aimed at reestablishing links with the southern Ibo peoples and eastern minorities with which the Muslim north was allied at various times in the first civilian regime. Northerners also seek to unite with the Middle Belt and southern Yoruba tribesmen opposed to the presidential candidacy of veteran Yoruba politician Chief Awolowo. Both northern

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proto-parties have some support among the Ibo and anti-Awolowo Yoruba, but just how much is not clear. At least some older Middle Belt politicians led by Joseph Tarka have thrown in their lot with the northern establishment party. Many younger Middle Belt leaders, however, show little inclination to go along with the Muslim north. They, along with many southerners, are determined not to allow Muslims again to dominate civilian politics.

Northerners probably are wooing Ibo and Yoruba support by promising to create additional states if southerners agree to support a reopening of the Islamic court issue after civilian rule is established. Muslims are seeking to capitalize on fairly widespread pressure in the south for new states and thereby a larger voice in Nigeria's federal system.

Party Development in the South

The political situation at this time in the more ethnically diverse south is particularly frantic, convoluted, and subject to change. Important Yoruba and Ibo ethnic factions are hedging their bets by forming an increasing number of small subregional political groupings to broker their support to the highest bidder. They are exploring all coalition possibilities and alliances inside and outside the south. Many are waiting to determine who the national winner might be before finally affiliating in a larger grouping and have expediently joined several groups in hopes of ending up in the winning corner.



Chief Awolowo

Chief Awolowo's group will be one of the principal southern parties, but he does not look like a

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winner in 1979. Now aged 69, Awolowo is the only surviving leader of Nigeria's three major regionally based parties of the early 1960s and is grudgingly respected even by his opponents for the administrative talents he displayed as a cabinet minister in the second military regime. His presidential candidacy allegedly is favored by fellow tribesmen in the current ruling military council, but this has yet to be confirmed. Awolowo may be somewhat less tarred in the public mind by the brush of old politics, since he was jailed in the early 1960s by his enemies in Nigeria's first civilian government.

FEDECO has ruled in favor of Awolowo's candidacy despite an amendment added to the new constitution by his southern foes aimed at disqualifying him. Awolowo claims to have support among Middle Belters and southern minorities and to have made important gains recently in the Muslim north and with southern Ibos. It is not certain, however, that he can count on even a bare majority of support among his fellow Yoruba. His candidacy is bitterly opposed by many southern Ibo politicians and the Muslim north. Awolowo has been branded variously by his critics as a dictator, tribalist, and reactionary.

Awolowo this fall will seek to become the articulator and leader of discontent among the intellectual and working classes. His aim is to build a national party of socialist persuasion along farmer-labor-intelligensia lines, and a number of Nigerian leftists can be expected to join his camp. Awolowo himself has become a more benign socialist than he was 10 years ago. He views capitalist business and foreign investment as a mixed but tolerable blessing, and he favors cooperative enterprises over state ownership.

There are mounting signs that those southerners and Middle Belters grouped together as the "Club of 19" will not succeed in transforming their group into a major southern-based party with national appeal. The group is based on an antinorthern coalition of young members of the constituent assembly who defeated the federal Islamic court proposal. Its strategy is to try to unite as much as possible the entire south and Middle Belt. Club leaders envision the group as a reformist party with a "social democratic" outlook dedicated to righting the ills of Nigerian society. The Club's biggest

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problems are its lack of leadership with a national image, factionalism, and inexperience. Also, the southern vote will be divided by Chief Awolowo, with many anti-Awolowo Yorubas and Ibos likely to line up with the Muslim north in the end.

Minor Parties

Some minor parties based on ideology, regional parochialism, and eccentric causes are sure to join in the campaigning this fall. Principal among these will be a socialist party composed of indigenous leftists and erstwhile Marxists. Inflation and the issue of how better to manage the troubled economy may give socialist politicians more ammunition than they might otherwise have. Just how large this group will be may depend on how many leftists throw their lot in with Chief Awolowo. [REDACTED]

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Ghana: Two Months After the Coup

Two months after the 5 July palace coup, Ghana's reconstituted military council is struggling to resolve serious political and economic problems inherited from General Acheampong before it turns the country over to civilian rule promised for July 1979. Ghana's new military rulers have reestablished a measure of public confidence in the government, and there are no indications that serious coup plotting is afoot.

The coup had the psychological effect of further lifting the lid on civilian political activity. Would-be politicians are gearing up for the future and are voicing increasing criticism of the continuing formal ban on politicking and the military's controversial plan for a nonparty, transitional national government after 1979. Serious cracks could develop within the ruling council over these issues, and the government may yet be forced to modify its political program to appease civilians.

The country's grave economic situation, which caused Acheampong's ouster, remains the most fundamental problem. The crucial test for the new government is whether it can implement a painful economic rescue operation that is acceptable to all Ghanaian factions and the International Monetary Fund. The regime is looking for help primarily from the West and its international aid institutions, which has led Accra to adopt an even more pro-Western, anti-Communist stance despite Ghana's continuing professed nonalignment.

Ghana's heretofore quiescent labor movement appears headed toward a period of general unrest as the country gropes toward constitutional rule. If labor unrest and civilian political contention grow more serious, the Akuffo government could find itself unable to implement the long-term economic stabilization program required for IMF assistance. On the other hand, should efforts succeed in getting the economy under control, the regime will face little threat to its grip on power.

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The Reconstituted Supreme Military Council

Although three members of the pre-5 July ruling council remain, the present seven-man body appears totally reconstituted in terms of purpose and outlook. By common agreement, council chairman and head of state General Akuffo is only first among equals, and the



Head of State General Frederick Akuffo

government is run collegially in contrast to Acheampong's one-man show. The revamped council is more strongly oriented toward the West and trying to subject Ghana's problems to military planning and discipline, though the council members seem to have no illusions about the challenges confronting them. They seem sincerely dedicated to putting Ghana on its feet and to getting the military out of the government as quickly as possible to refurbish the Army's eroded image. The council contains a fairly representative balance of the country's tribal interests, with no intertribal rivalries evident.

Akuffo and the two other holdover council members were the most respected of Acheampong's former associates and the least tainted by allegations of corruption. The four most notoriously corrupt council members under Acheampong were dropped soon after the coup, but this has not stilled private demands for prosecution of Acheampong and his top aides, with whom Akuffo and the other holdover councilmen are associated in the public's eye. One of the thorniest problems facing the reconstituted council is how to deal with such pressure. If investigations are started, they could lead to some holdover figures, greatly embarrass the new government, which is trying to project an image of probity, and possibly prompt the ouster of additional councilmen.

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Akuffo seems secure in his position for now, and his colleagues reportedly believe he is doing a good job under difficult circumstances. Akuffo together with Chief of Defense Staff General Hamidu--the number-two man--and Air Force Commander General Boakye are the council's strongest personalities. Hamidu, who has considerable support in the officer corps and is the ranking northerner in the government, appears to be avoiding involvement in national issues before the council in the hope of keeping his military post under civilian rule. Army Commander General Odartey-Wellington, another figure his fellow council members have to reckon with, is a spokesman for lower ranking officers whose demand for Acheampong's resignation in late June precipitated the 5 July coup.

The Military Advisory Council

Younger and more junior Ghanaian military officers have an influential voice in the Akuffo government through the Military Advisory Council and will play a key role in the direction of Ghanaian politics. The council has at least 27 members with an inner circle of battalion-level commanders. Membership is automatic upon assuming the qualifying military position. The MAC serves as a monitoring body and a political forum to express the views of the entire officer corps on national issues and decisions being considered by the Supreme Military Council. Any matter that receives unanimous support within the MAC is virtually assured of being implemented by the Supreme Military Council. Like their superiors, MAC members believe the military after six years in power should get out of government as expeditiously as possible.

Some Popular First Steps

The Akuffo regime has moved swiftly to try to consolidate its power and popularity in hopes of fostering a climate of national reconciliation that will facilitate political and economic reforms. These steps include:

- The release of civilian political detainees held by Acheampong and restoration of their assets.

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- A general amnesty for all Ghanaians in self-imposed exile.
- The abolition of four pro-Acheampong political organizations that were used to promote his campaign for a future "union" government dominated by the military.
- The reduction in the number of military officers serving in civilian organizations and the placement of more civilians in ministerial and regional posts.
- The reorganization of the top echelon of the civil service to eliminate inefficient officials of the former regime and to promote the best available young managers to key positions of authority.
- Assurances of greater press freedom.

Troubled Proposal for Transitional Government

The civilian elite eagerly wants its turn at power, but the nature of General Akuffo's announced plans for restoring constitutional rule have sparked acrimonious debate among professional groups, academics, and former politicians. These plans call for a popularly elected, transitional civilian government to rule for at least four years from July 1979. Both the military and the political parties would be denied roles in the transitional government. It is intended to give Ghana a breather from divisive party politics so that civilians can better decide what form of governmental structure and permanent constitution they want. Many in the military sincerely believe that the country is not yet ready for the stress of party politics. A government appointed commission is preparing a constitution for the transitional government that will be considered by a constituent assembly this November.

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It is clear from the growing tide of rhetoric, however, that many politically aware Ghanians favor an immediate lifting of the ban on political parties and a return after next July to a party-based civilian government. They view with some skepticism the government's intention to surrender power and believe the military should not dictate the form of government that will succeed it. The influential Ghana Bar Association has called for the disbandment of the constitutional drafting commission and the immediate appointment of a constituent assembly to decide a future form of government using the 1969 party-based constitution as a working model. Only one former politician of stature has so far endorsed the military's plan for constitutional rule.

The government's response has been to reiterate publicly that the ban on political activity remains in effect. This is not likely to still public discussion and demands for change in the regime's political program, which are sure to increase as the date for convening the constituent assembly draws closer. Akuffo probably will be obliged to give at least some ground, particularly since there are indications that the rest of the military council is by no means united behind the concept of a nonparty, interim civilian government after 1979.

Labor Restiveness

Organized labor's reaction to the military's political and economic plans will matter because of its potential for causing major unrest. The leadership of the 500,000-member Ghana Trades Union Congress, the country's only central labor organization, has adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the Akuffo regime.

Ghana's labor movement remained quiescent throughout the six-year rule of the generally pro-labor Acheampong, despite a steady deterioration in the economy. Labor leaders distrust the civilian professionals and intellectuals who mounted open opposition to Acheampong last year. Organized labor was rewarded with sweeping wage and salary increases for staying on the sidelines during the June 1977 strike of professionals.

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These gains have been wiped out by accelerating inflation. Consumer prices in the last year have increased by 150 percent. Serious shortages of food and other basic commodities continue. Workers began releasing pent-up frustration last month by launching several wildcat strikes. Independent strike actions appear to be increasing, and union leadership may lose control of the situation. Basic economic reforms under consideration by the regime could make the workers' plight even more difficult over the short run.

Commitment to Economic Reform

The Akuffo government is publicly committed to significant economic policy changes, but to date has undertaken only a few concrete measures. It is discussing projected changes with the International Monetary Fund, Western donor countries, and a private investment banking consortium to consider how best to address the massive economic problems inherited from the Acheampong era of gross mismanagement and resource waste. An economic reform program at minimum will have to tackle the long-standing problems of hyperinflation, an overvalued currency, an unbalanced budget, ineffectual price and distribution controls, inadequate imports of essential raw materials for industry, and inefficient state corporations and industries.

Ghana apparently is seeking about \$1 billion to support its evolving economic policy package. It has begun serious negotiations with the IMF for a stabilization program and a standby loan. Progress in these discussions is the key to forward movement by Western donors and private investment groups. The Akuffo government wants to conclude an agreement with the IMF in time for a stabilization program to get well under way before the scheduled changeover to constitutional rule in July 1979. These negotiations will take considerable time, however, and final agreement with the IMF may not be reached before early 1979. Even then, there is no quick solution to Ghana's economic ills. The task of bringing discipline to the management of the economy is likely to require three to five years or more. Ghana's future civilian government may not have the will to see this process through.

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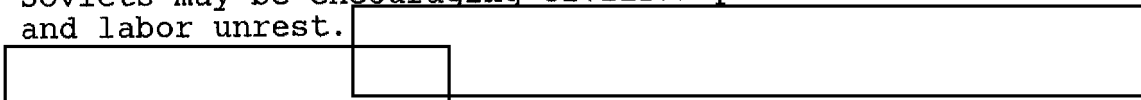
Ghana has approached several Western donors, particularly the UK and US, for short-term balance of payments support and food aid. Britain, the former colonial power and still the largest foreign investor in Ghana, is moving to provide some assistance in advance of an official Ghanaian economic program or agreement with the IMF.



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Anti-Communist Gestures

Though careful to maintain Ghana's posture of non-alignment, the Akuffo government has taken some pointed anti-Communist gestures since taking power to underscore its pro-Western orientation. Following the 5 July coup, General Akuffo first outlined his government's plans to heads of Western diplomatic missions, leaving a session with Communist diplomats until the next day. Two Soviet-influenced civilians holding key posts under Acheampong in the government-owned press have been replaced by men with pro-Western views. A government spokesman recently issued a stern warning directed at Communist missions in Accra to cease interference in Ghanaian affairs. Four Soviet officials and an East German subsequently were expelled. The government reportedly suspects that the Soviets may be encouraging civilian political dissent and labor unrest.



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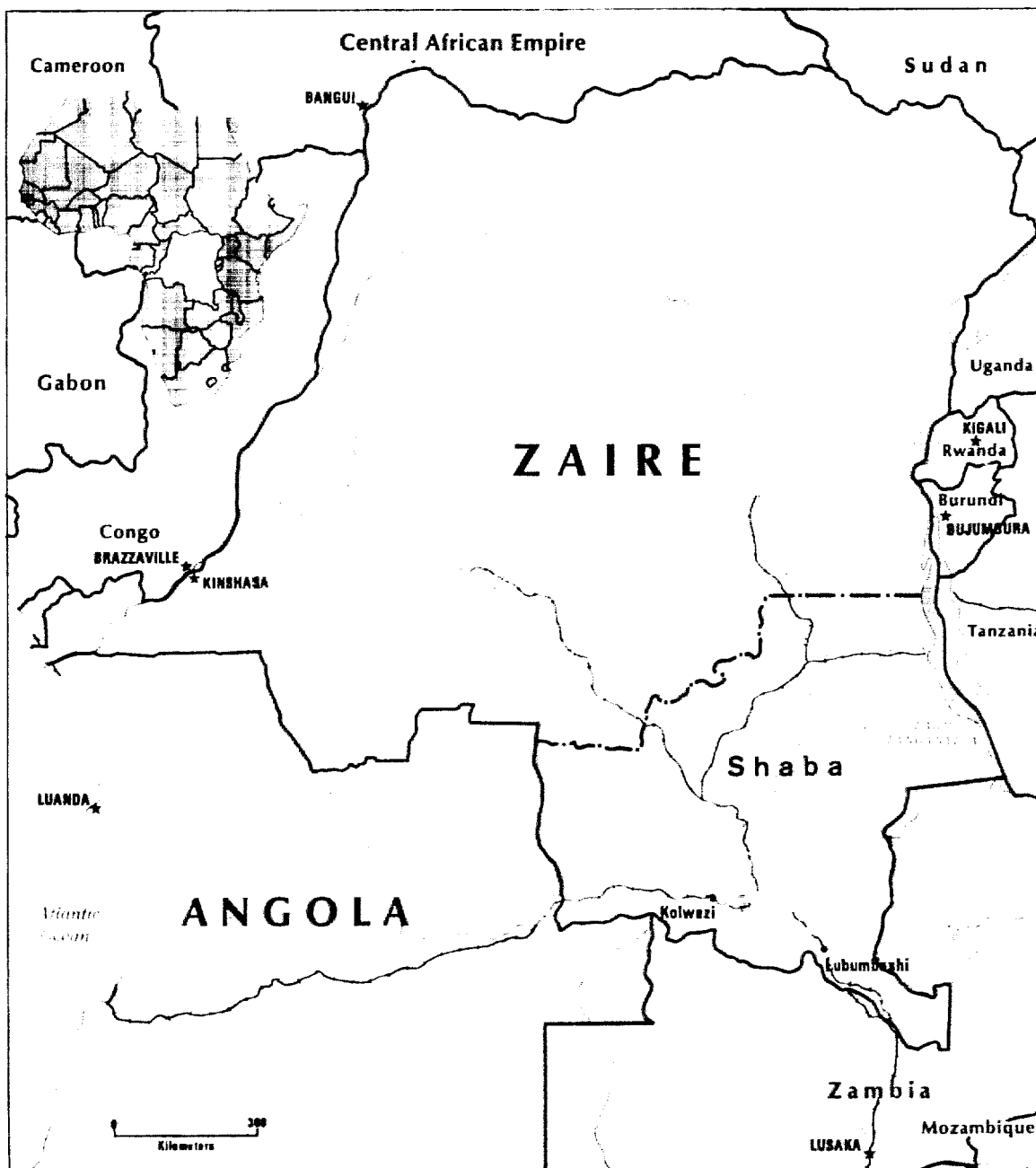
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Zaire: The Situation In Shaba

Zairian President Mobutu remains in serious trouble because of widespread dissatisfaction with his regime and continuing economic, political, and social problems. The presence of the Pan-African Force (PAF) in Shaba and the rapprochement with Angola, however, have allowed him time to recover partially from the staggering effects of last May's invasion of Shaba Region and provide him with some breathing room to ponder his next moves. Although the National Front for the Liberation of the Congo (FNLC) presently does not pose a significant threat to Shaba, the region's relative stability is largely the result of the PAF's presence and may not survive its eventual departure.

According to reports from the US Embassy in Kinshasa and the Consulate in Lubumbashi, the African force--about 2,400 troops--has the situation well in hand. Under the general leadership of the Moroccans, the force has won the respect of both the Zairian civilians and the expatriate community. In addition to its military duties, the PAF has prevented the Zairian Army from committing its usual excesses against the civilian population.



Moroccan and Zairian troops in Shaba

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Although the force continues extensive patrols in and around Kolwezi and the Angolan border area, it has seen practically no combat with the rebels since assuming its role. In spite of the general quiescence in the region, most observers, including the commanders of the PAF, believe there are rebels and caches of arms in and around the African sections of Lubumbashi and in villages in southern Shaba.

The PAF's major functions are keeping the rebel potential to a minimum while protecting the region's major economic installations--many of which are vulnerable to attack of sabotage--and protecting and reassuring the civilian community. While there are continuing acts of armed banditry and cattle rustling in the region, apparently by isolated rebel bands, the US Embassy reports that the general situation is "stable" and that the likelihood of serious warfare developing under the present situation is remote.

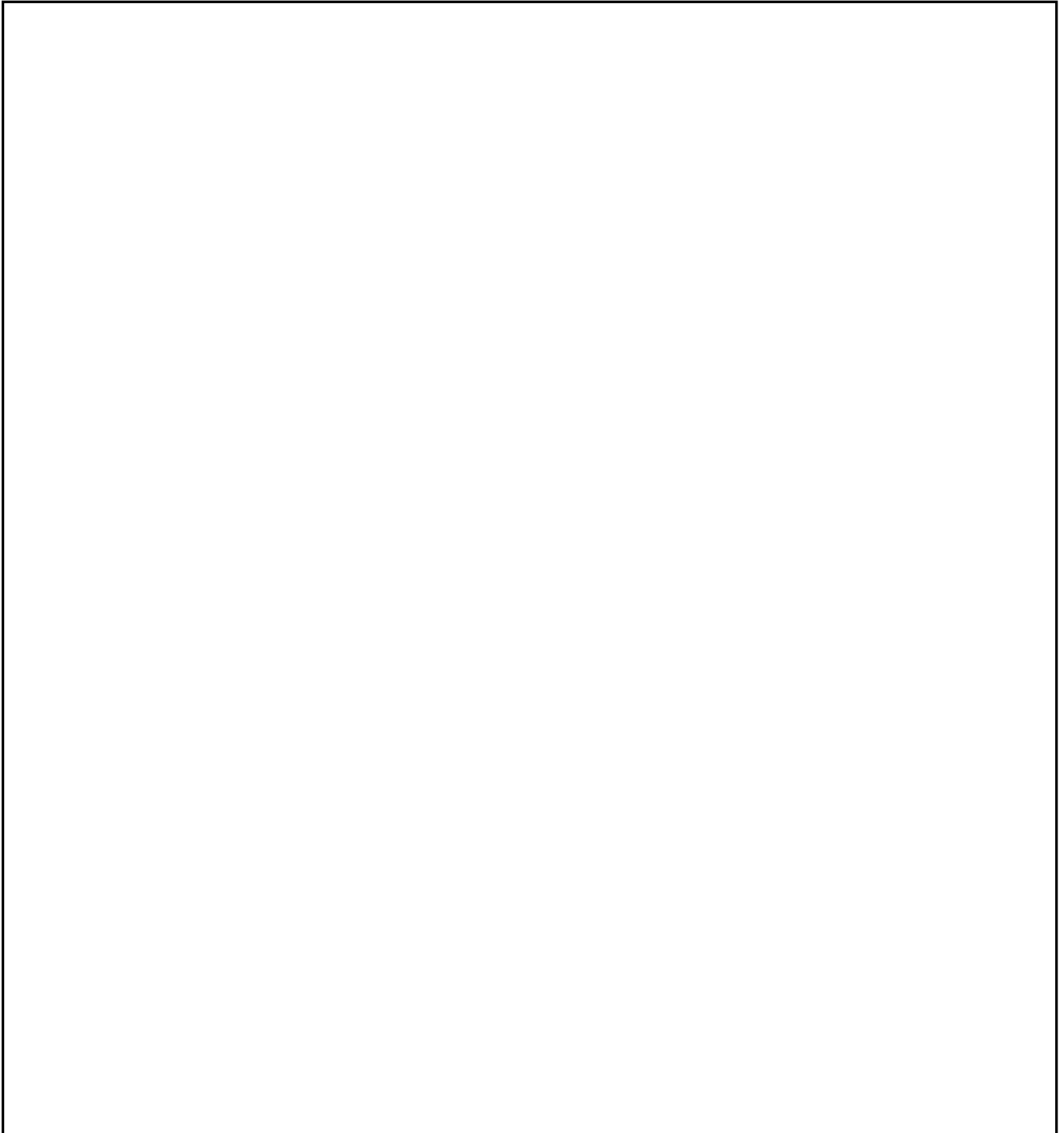
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In addition to the security provided by the PAF, the Zairian Army is also continuing patrols in the region. Their efforts, however, are hampered by organizational, logistic, and supply problems, as well as antagonism between the Army and the local population. Although the Army has captured several rebel "suspects," it will not soon be capable of replacing the PAF. Moreover, without the presence of the PAF, expatriates vital to the operation of Kolwezi's mining operations would be reluctant to remain in Shaba, and the Zairian Government probably would be unable to recruit new technicians to replace those who departed because of the rebel invasion. Although some Zairians probably resent the foreign troops, they recognize that, without the PAF, Shaba could easily be disrupted and Kolwezi's industrial complex probably would be out of operation. There has been surprisingly little friction so far between the PAF and the Zairian Army.

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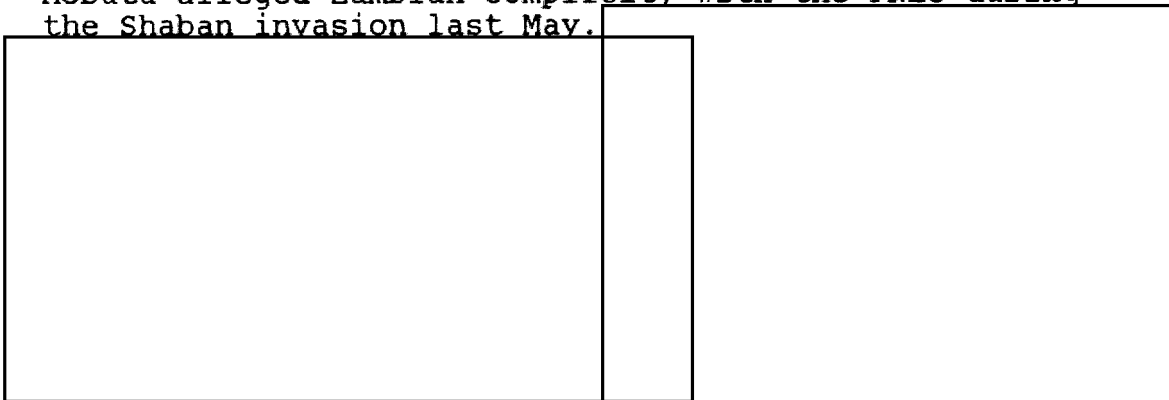


In addition to its recent rapprochement with Angola, Zaire apparently is also interested in repairing relations

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with neighboring Zambia. Relations were strained when Mobutu alleged Zambian complicity with the FNLC during the Shaban invasion last May.



The Growing Refugee Problem

Zairian refugees in Angola and Zambia apparently are taking advantage of Mobutu's amnesty and returning home in increasing numbers. The Zairian Government claims more than 9,000 refugees have already returned. Other sources also indicate that many of the more than 200,000 refugees presently in Angola wish to return to Zaire.

The US Embassy is concerned about the lack of comprehensive planning by the Zairian Government and international relief organizations to meet the needs of the refugees and other displaced persons. Zairian officials apparently do not have a clear idea of the number of refugees likely to return.

Unless the Zairian Government moves quickly to enlist the support of the international community and seeks assistance from the UN High Commission for Refugees and the Red Cross, Mobutu's amnesty could result in a potentially explosive situation. The Embassy estimates that several tens of thousands of Shaba refugees from Angola and displaced persons within Zaire may be returning to their Shaban villages during the next few months. Many will find their homes looted and burned and their crops destroyed. If assistance is not forthcoming, the refugees will, in effect, constitute a large and potentially disruptive vagrant population that the Zairian Government may be unable to control.

[redacted] fears that because the returnees have no identification documents and are unemployed, they will be

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harassed by the Army. [REDACTED]

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the refugees could become sources of discontent, especially in the larger urban areas such as Lubumbashi.

Mobutu To Remain Under Siege

Although Mobutu's crucial problem of an active military threat in Shaba has been considerably reduced, he is still under pressure to make substantial internal changes and deal with serious new problems that continue to arise. These new problems--such as the return to Shaba of large numbers of refugees--will exacerbate existing economic grievances and heighten ethnic and regional tensions. The President's ability--and will--to deal effectively with a myriad of internal issues and to arrest the country's economic and political decay will be severely tested during the coming months. Although Mobutu probably will survive, rumors of new rebel attacks and real or imagined plots against his regime will continue. Mobutu's numerous enemies can be expected to exploit the country's continuing incoherence. [REDACTED]

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Uganda: Another Look at the Amin Regime

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There has been an upswing in tension and security measures in recent weeks, but President Idi Amin does not appear to be seriously threatened. Amin is aware of his country's many problems--the economy is in the doldrums, there is no firm policy guidance, and foreign states keep their distance. In addition, the army, which is at the same time the major prop and major threat to Amin, is as undisciplined as ever. The erratic President, however, is ineffectual in coping with his troubles, and a new incident could set off a wave of instability at any time. Even if Amin should be removed--by whatever means--the situation in Uganda probably would not change very much, given the basic tribal and religious divisions that characterize Uganda's population. There is no obvious successor waiting in the wings.

President Amin defines national policy in rambling, almost daily speeches. His followup is seldom sustained, and widespread purges, carried out whenever the regime has felt threatened, have liquidated or frightened away most Ugandans with the skills and experience needed to manage the economy and operate the country. Administration is now mainly left to uneducated soldiers from the most backward part of the country.

Trouble in Amin's Camp

Amin's most immediate problem is to keep his own supporters in line. The recent upsurge in tension stemmed from an internal power struggle between two groups of northern Muslim military officers--the successors to the northern Christian Lango and Acholi tribesmen who traditionally had dominated Uganda's military. After Amin came to power in 1971, he purged the Lango and Acholi officers and technical personnel and promoted his fellow Muslims to positions of military leadership, even though many of them were illiterate and militarily incompetent.

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After each plot against him, Amin has broadened his purges. He now appears to be relying more and more exclusively on members of his own tribal group, the Kakwa, which composes less than 1 percent of Uganda's population but extends across the Sudanese border. Until quite recently, these "Sudanese" shared power with other Muslim officers from the same area of northwestern Uganda. This latter group--known collectively as "Nubians"--gained positions of importance after the purges that followed the assassination attempt against Amin in June 1977.

Amin has now dismissed most of the Nubians from the cabinet--assuming their ministries himself, at least temporarily--and removed some of them from Army commands. This series of actions began with the still-mysterious auto accident of Vice President Mustafa Adrisi in mid-April.

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During the spring, Amin ousted the Ministers of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Information and transferred their functions, along with the Vice President's responsibilities as Minister of Defense, to the Office of the Presidency. Key aspects of police and prison administration were similarly transferred. The most recent Nubian to be fired, on 26 July, was Minister of Finance and Chief of Staff Moses Ali, who was long thought to be "untouchable" because of his following in the Army.

These actions were apparently in response to widespread complaints about the corruption and brutality of the Nubians. In April, Amin publicly accused top military officers and cabinet members of stealing large amounts of public money. Rumors that high-level officials were involved in coffee smuggling and foreign exchange irregularities continued to circulate well into the summer.

Amin evidently has weathered whatever storm was raised by these ousters, though security precautions remain noticeably tighter. There is no evidence that the Nubians in the Army--essentially a small group unaccustomed to power and wealth--are seeking revenge. Moses Ali has been permitted to return to his home village.

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The military is the only institution in the country with sufficient strength to challenge the President. For the most part, it has supported his regime, and he has reciprocated by seeing that the military is supplied with enough consumer goods to keep at least the key units happy.

Nevertheless, the military represents the most serious threat to Amin's continued rule. Arms owned by civilians were called in last year, leaving military personnel the only major group with weapons at their disposal. Plotters with contacts in the military would also stand the best chance of penetrating Amin's security apparatus and of winning the support of units considered loyal to him. Although Uganda's armed forces are disintegrating as effective fighting units because of the recurring purges of officers, insubordination and desertion among the lower ranks, and internal tribal and religious feuding, they would probably be capable of overthrowing Amin if they finally turn against him.

Other Dissidents

Reports of plots to overthrow Amin's government circulate fairly regularly, and a number of unsuccessful attempts have been made against him. As long as key Army units remain loyal, challenges from local civilians or from exile groups are unlikely to get very far. The possibility of assassination, however, cannot be ruled out.

Uganda's persistent and strong tribal rivalries are the primary reason no serious opposition movement has developed. Exile groups are organized on tribal lines, and their ties with each other and with groups within Uganda are weak. If any of the coup plotters should succeed in gaining power, the odds are that they would in turn harass rival tribal and religious groups.

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